

BOOK REVIEW

Vine of the Soul: Medicine Men, their Plants and Rituals in the Colombian Amazonia. Richard Evans Schultes and Robert F. Raffauf. Oracle, AZ: Synergetic Press, Inc., 1992. Pp. iv, 288. \$22.95 (paperbound). ISBN 0-907791-24-7.

Similar in format to the masterpiece photographic essay *Where the Gods Reign: Plants and People of the Colombian Amazon* (Schultes 1988), *Vine of the Soul* is in many ways a companion volume. Almost none of the 160 impressive, well chosen photographs in the present work appeared in *Where the Gods Reign*. A quote from my review of that book (Van Asdall 1989) is equally true here: "The numerous photographs are at once spectacular, beautiful, fascinating, and of excellent quality." A large percentage of these are of *payés* (medicine men), and the plants, paraphernalia, and preparations associated with their art. Photographs of forest,

rivers, waterfalls, and other scenes of natural splendor are appropriate in this context because medicine men regard them as "abodes of spirits." Other photographs show sacred dances, art, and architecture, and rituals associated with hunting and fishing. The contributions of second author, Robert F. Raffauf, give insight into the biodynamics of *Banisteriopsis caapi*, (Malpighiaceae) "vine of the soul" (from the Quichua name, *ayahuasca*) and other "plants in cosmic communication."

Following the format of its companion volume, each of the photographs is accompanied by an extended commentary and a quotation from the writings or lectures of some of the anthropologists, explorers, ethnobotanists, and others who have worked in the Colombian Amazonia. Although some of the quotations date from the early 1900s or before, many are from studies of the last three decades, e.g., those of Michael J. Harner, Walter F. Lewis, Memory P.F. Lewis, Tommie E. Lockwood, Timothy Plowman, Melvin J. Shemluck, and Gerardo Reichel-Dolmatoff, to whom the book is dedicated. These singularly appropriate commentaries and quotations are, in and of themselves, lessons in ethnobotany. These texts and photographs are so well suited to one another, each complementing and elucidating the other, that the media seem destined to blend giving each of the facing pages an all but unified presentation—a manifestation of the authors' vision and a tribute to the layout artists. *Vine of the Soul* is thus both a work of art and an ethnobotanical workshop.

Both the Foreward (by Ghilleen T. Prance) and the Introduction present interesting background material. Features not found in the companion book but which are welcome additions here are an Epilogue (by Michael J. Balick), a Glossary, and an Index to Quotations, giving complete bibliographic citations to all the accompanying quotations including those examples noted above.

Since most of these photographs were taken between 1941 and 1961, it is probable that because of acculturation of the indigenous people, habitat destruction, and extinction or near extinction of species, only a handful of comparable photographs could be taken today. How fortunate we are that Professors Schultes and Raffauf have shared these treasures with us and that Synergetic Press has offered them to us in book form at such a bargain.

LITERATURE CITED

- SCHULTES, RICHARD EVANS. 1988. *Where the Gods Reign: Plants and People of the Colombian Amazon*. Synergetic Press, Inc., Oracle, AZ.
- VAN ASDALL, WILLARD. 1989. Book review of *Where the Gods Reign: Plants and People of the Colombian Amazon*, by Richard Evans Schultes. *Journal of Ethnobiology* 9:156-157.

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